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AN
Introductory Discourse,
BY
JOSEPH COCKIN; *K*
A CHARGE,
BY EDWARD PARSONS;

AND
A SERMON,
By SAMUEL BOTTOMLEY:

WITH THE
CONFESSION OF FAITH,
DELIVERED ON TUESDAY, APRIL 18, 1797,
AT THE PUBLIC SEPARATION OF
SAMUEL WYDOWN,
TO THE
PASTORAL OFFICE,
IN THE INDEPENDENT CHURCH,
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Introductory Discourse,

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THE occasion which has brought us together this day, is highly pleasing. Those who are more immediately concerned in the duties of it, rejoice in this accomplishment of their desires.— We, who are come from some distance, participate in the general pleasure. We are witnesses of the steadfastness of your faith in Christ; of your christian order and fellowship; and we desire to be helpers of your joy.

You have had a stated ministry among you for some time. This ministry has been owned of God, for calling some from the error of their ways; these have given up themselves, first to the Lord, and afterwards one to another, according to the directions of his word. You, brethren, stand in the relation of spiritual members in the mystical body of Christ; and are honoured with the appellation, and character of a Christian Church. By the authority vested in you, as a Society of Christians, you have chosen a Pastor, whose business is, to feed you with living bread. We, the Ministers of Christ, and Servants of the Churches, are come at your request, to set him apart to the work of the Lord; to give you our advice, and solemnly to recommend both you, and him, to God.

It is of much more importance to belong to the spiritual, and invisible Church ; than *merely* to have a place in that which is outward, and visible. To possess the grace of God in the heart, is acknowledged by christians of every denomination, to be more necessary, than to belong in profession, and attachment only, to the most pure, and best constituted church upon earth. The whole of christian discipline must give way to those weightier matters, repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, the things pertaining to church discipline, are worthy of serious enquiry. God has revealed them. They belong to the beauty and happiness of christian societies ; and deserve, more especially on these occasions, a serious investigation.

The New Testament is the rule of christian government, as well as of faith and practice. If we had no standard, or test of truth, maxims of prudence would be our best guide. Then every class of christians would be left to their own wisdom, to frame such laws as might best suit existing circumstances. But, on the contrary, Jesus Christ, whose sole prerogative it is, so to do, has given us a complete pattern of his house ; its orders and regulations ; nor does he allow any man, or set of men, however dignified, to make any additions or alterations whatever.

If there be a certain rule, and if that rule be sufficiently plain, it might be supposed that the christian world would be blessed with uniformity of sentiment upon this subject. That there would be but one opinion respecting the nature and constitution of a gospel church, who should be its proper officers, and what their prerogatives, and duties. But, alas, it is far otherwise ! The church is split into parties ; principally by the ignorance, and superstition of former times ; and these parties are

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still kept up, by interest and bigotry. An enquiry into the nature of these opinions, we will now make, sensible at the same time, of the prejudices of education, and in a consistency with all that love we owe to other christians.

The best and easiest way to come at the truth, in some cases, is by recital and comparison. We will try this method in the present instance. We will give you a view of some of the leading ideas of several denominations; so that by comparing these with what is said of the New Testament Churches, you may be the better able to form your own judgments; or be more confirmed in your former sentiments. Our limits will not allow of any great enlargement; but we will apply this thought briefly, to Episcopacy, Presbyterianism, and Independency.

An Episcopal Church claims our first attention, as it is most eminent in this kingdom, both for its numbers, and general spread. Episcopacy is that form of church government, in which diocesan Bishops are established, as distinct from, and superior to Priests, and Presbyters. The divine right of Bishops, as succeeding by direct and lineal descent from the Apostles; has been formerly defended with great zeal: But whatever arguments have been brought in its favour, it is certainly subject to this inconvenience, of being untenable without acknowledging the authority of the Papal Chair. If the legitimate succession of the Bishops of Rome be not allowed, the uninterrupted succession cannot be made out; and consequently the divine right must fall to the ground; and Bishops be no more, with respect to any power given to them by Christ, than any other Christian Minister.

One leading idea of such a church is, that it is national. It includes every individual in the country where it exists. Those who profess not to belong to its communion, are comprehended therein,

therein, as well as those who do. Yea, even all the colonies, and dependencies of the country; however widely extended, or wherever situated.— Into this church persons of every description are admitted, even to its most sacred ordinances, and its most holy offices. The elements representing the body and blood of Christ, after the most solemn consecration, are administered as tests of distinction, and as qualifications for civil offices in the state, instead of faith in his sacrifice. And what is awful to relate, its most enlightened and evangelical Ministers, have served at the sacred altar for such purposes, and have endeavoured to justify themselves in so doing.

The National Church is established by civil laws, and is considered as an essential branch of the state. Hence it comes to pass, that they are always connected; and are supposed mutually to support each other. Of the church so established, the reigning person (King or Queen) is constituted head; to whom belongs the right of appointing all its great officers. He also grants certain ecclesiastical dignities, honours, and privileges, to those who belong to this establishment, above others, who are equally his subjects. He has likewise the right of presenting to all those benefices, as they become vacant, which are in the gift of the Crown. The King is vested with power to exercise all manner of ecclesiastical jurisdiction. Neither the Archbishops, nor any other ecclesiastical persons, have any power but by the King's majesty. He has full authority to hear and determine all ecclesiastical causes; and to correct and reform all heresies whatever.

Over the Established Church preside certain ecclesiastical officers, who have very different degrees of power, under the King, as well as very different names. There are Archbishops, Diocesan Bishops,

Bishops, Archdeacons, Deans, Prebendaries, Canons, Minor Canons, Chancellors, Vicars-general, &c. The Archbishops are two. These preside over the other twenty-four Bishops, who are called suffragans. The Bishops have the sole power of ordaining the Clergy, over whom they have considerable authority. They perform the rites of consecration, and confirmation; and to one of them belongs the office of anointing, and crowning the King. They have also great honours, being exalted to the dignity of spiritual Lords, and having a place in the upper House of Parliament. The Bishops have their courts of judicature held in their Cathedrals, from whence they issue out writs in their own names. They depute Chancellors, to act as judges in different causes; on which they pass sentence even without a jury. Sometimes they inflict very heavy secular punishments.

The Church thus constituted, has belonging to it various articles of faith, which are considered as the test of truth and orthodoxy. The reason assigned for them is, to promote uniformity of sentiment. All who enter into holy orders, in this communion, are obliged to declare upon oath, their firm belief of these articles.

There is also a Liturgy, or common form of prayer, which on all occasions must be read, as directed in the rubric. The whole form of worship is prescribed; even what portions of scripture must be read, so that a Minister has no right to alter any part of the service, or to adapt any thing of his own, to particular occasions, whatever they may be. Under the covert of the state; and backed by the authority of the civil law; the church has a power of exacting tithes of various descriptions; church rates, dues, and offerings. If these be not regularly paid, she can distrain as in cases of debt; and

and even cast into prison. She claims a power to institute ceremonies in religious worship.

How far this notion of a Christian Church is agreeable to the New Testament model, I leave to you who are acquainted with that sacred book. There is one thing however, which ought not to be omitted on this subject; which is, that Jesus Christ disclaimed all connexion between his kingdom, and that of this world. And, indeed, if they had not been essentially distinct in their own nature, they could not have been connected, either in his own life time, or in that of the Apostles; for the christian religion was not favoured in either of these periods by any reigning Prince upon earth.

If the church derives such essential benefits from its connexion with the state, as we sometimes hear represented; and if this connexion be so necessary for the true interests of both; is it not surprising that our Lord rejected the proposal of the Jews to make him a King? Was not this a sad mistake? If he had accepted their offer, might he not have had a much better opportunity of doing good to the infant cause? He might then have been able to establish Christianity in the way it has been established since. His followers might have been raised from their despicable situations, and his Ministers exalted to pre-eminence. He might have found means to support his servants in an honourable way, by endowments and legal demands, without subjecting them to the servile method of voluntary contribution; and of softening their doctrines so as not to offend their richer hearers, lest they should lose their bread, as others are said to do, because they cannot compel the payment of their salaries. But the religion of Christ was to prevail in another way. It was not suitable to his designs, to connect secular and spiritual interests together in such indissoluble bonds. He respected
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civil authority as an ordinance of God, and gave to his followers examples of ready obedience; but he never availed himself of such power, either to spread, or establish his cause.

If our Lord's kingdom be purely spiritual; if no alliance were formed in his lifetime, or by his order, how is it, or by what power, that they have been connected since? How came the Christian Church by all its honours in its alliance with the kingdoms of this world? The grand source of these things must be traced up to the times of Constantine the Great. On his conversion to christianity, he incorporated the Pagan rites into the Christian Church. The ministers of that church were now exalted to great dignity. Rome-Pagan hastened to become Rome-Christian. The pride of the human mind struggled for pre-eminence. Clerical pomp, contending with general ignorance, availed itself of rising power, and great superstition, till it gained the ascendancy, and the humble, and self-denying religion of Jesus Christ was exalted, not only above the kingdoms of this world, but above all that is called God. A glorious reformation has indeed rectified some great errors. It has humbled the pride of priestly dignity; bringing down the tripple crown, taking the keys from the girdle of St. Peter, and some of the names of blasphemy which formerly obtained. But in the opinion of some dispassionate and impartial men, there are yet many things remaining contrary to the simplicity of Christ.

The next view of a church now to be exhibited, is that which obtains among the Presbyterians. On this subject, it seems necessary, first of all, to rectify a mistake. The Dissenters in this kingdom are generally classed in three denominations; the Presbyterians, the Independents, and the Baptists. Whatever difference there may be among these denominations

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in other respects, there is very little, if any at all, in reference to the nature and constitution of a church. The term Presbyterian, in England, as it respects discipline, is more a name of distinction than of difference. Most of those who are called Presbyterians among us, are as much independent, both in principle and practice, as any other. Indeed, whatever ideas individuals may have, there neither is, nor can be, any Presbyterian Church-government in England. There are no Presbyteries, no Provincial Synods, nor any General Assembly. Every congregation must manage its own affairs, which is the very essence of independency.

The Presbyterian is, in the first view of it, common with the Episcopal. They maintain that it is national, and must be connected with the state, and established by law. On this plan the Church of Scotland is constituted. The Presbyterians believe, that the authority of their ministers is derived from the Holy Ghost, by the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery. But they affirm, that there is no order of officers in the church superior to that of presbyters. That all ministers, being ambassadors for Christ, are equal by their commission. In this they differ from the Episcopalians.

The officers belonging to this church are a mixture of the clergy, and lay-brethren. These are generally called Elders. Their business is to assist the minister in what relates to the order and discipline of the congregation over which they preside.

Being national, the Church of Scotland has not its sole power, for internal government, lodged in an individual congregation. A number of men, meeting in the same place, cannot determine their own affairs among themselves. In cases of difference, they must have recourse to some larger, or superior Ecclesiastical Court. They have indeed

a judicatory among themselves, called the Kirk-session; but their decisions are no way binding, as any person who thinks himself aggrieved, may enter his protest against the sentence, and appeal to the judgment of an higher assembly.

The Presbytery is the next Judicatory above the Kirk-session. It consists of all the pastors, within a certain district; and one ruling elder from every parish. It treats of the particular concerns within its own limits; relating chiefly to candidates for the ministry, sentences of excommunication, and appeals from the Kirk-session.

The Provincial Synod is the third degree of Ecclesiastical power in that church. This court commonly meets twice a-year, and has a controul over the Presbytery, as the Presbytery has over the Kirk-session.

But the highest authority of all, is the General Assembly. This august body, which wants nothing but a New Testament institution to make it truly venerable, consists of a number of ministers, of ruling elders, and commissioners from the universities, and royal boroughs. From the decisions of the General Assembly there can be no appeal, in matters of religion, as there is no superior court.

Having mentioned the Episcopal and Presbyterian views of churches and their government; we pass on to the Independent. This denomination of christians is so called, from their maintaining that each distinct congregation, united together in the bonds of christian fellowship, is a complete church. That it has sufficient power within itself to perform every thing relating to church-government; and is in no respect subject, or accountable, to any other body of men in any of its transactions.

A church, according to the notion of the Independants, consists of a number of serious and godly people, who being called by grace, and devoted to

God, are spiritually joined one to another, for the purposes of edification and comfort.

Of such churches it is supposed those of Corinth and Galatia were, with all the rest, planted by the apostles. The Independent Church, has no connexion with the state, being wholly of a different nature, and constituted for other purposes. It is, as one says, "*Imperium in imperio.*" Its officers are Pastors and Deacons only. All other Ecclesiastical officers, whatever be their appellations, whether Teacher, Minister, or Bishop, the Independents disavow. The duties of the Pastor, are the ministry of the gospel, and prayer; and the Deacons are to serve tables. They consider Christ as the only head of his church, who has purchased it with his blood, and renewed it by his grace, and has therefore a right to govern it according to his pleasure. In matters of religion, his laws alone are binding on them; nor do they call any man upon earth master. They claim the right of choosing their own ministers; thinking it only reasonable, that men should have the same liberty in things spiritual, which they have in the common affairs of life. These ministers have no authority one over another, nor any superiority, except in their piety and abilities*. They cannot interfere in each others department; nor can one church annul, or counteract the decisions of another. Every church is a distinct body-corporate. Its rules are the laws of Christ; its Kirk-sessions, Provincial Synod, and General Assembly, are its church meetings; and its
Moderator

* It is said, that there is considerable power lodged in the hands of the Independent fund board. We have been asked, what difference there is between the government of a bench of Bishops and a board of Ministers? But it should be remembered, that whatever authority this body of men has, it is not peculiar to the Ministers, as there are many lay-gentlemen among them.

Moderator is the minister, who is constituted master of the assembly by Christ. From the determination of such meetings there is no appeal.

The members of the church owe to each other mutual duties, such as are appointed by Christ. They are to love as brethren, to be pitiful and courteous; such as are in want must be relieved, without which benevolence, we give but little proof of our love, either to our great Master, or his children. The profession and obligations of every member of a christian society, oblige them to promote each others happiness and edification.

These different churches have also different views of ordination. The Church of England has its power of ordination in the Bishop of a diocese; the Presbyterians in the Presbytery, and the Independents in the church over which the minister is to preside. The two former suppose, that ordination is essential to the ministry; but the latter think it can give a man no power but what he had before. What is not conferred by Christ, cannot be obtained by any act of his servants. Ordination then, among us, is considered, not as giving any power, nor as authorising a man to preach, or administer the sacraments; but as a decent and orderly introduction to the work of the Lord; as an open

Nor is this power any more than an ability to dispense favors, as the almoners of their respective congregations. Far as I am from both the principle and love of lordly dominion in matters of religion, I sincerely wish there were many other societies, of equal power, and inclination to do good. Perhaps there is not one in this kingdom more venerable for its standing, or more generally useful to christianity. Animated by their example, other denominations have been stirred up to similar exertions. They pretend to no superiority. They neither give laws nor demand obedience. No example can be given of their authoritative interference in either faith or practice, in any one instance. From the board we receive benefits; but from the bench we receive laws.

open avowal of a minister's religious sentiments; and a respectable way of shewing his connexion with his brethren. It gives an opportunity of investigating the nature of Christian Churches; of pointing out the duty of a Pastor, and of enforcing the laws of the House of God. It stirs up a young man to his duty in the divine service, and binds him afterwards to adhere to the principles of his public confession. It cements the affections of the minister and his congregation, and calls forth their resolutions to walk together as becomes their spiritual relation. We humbly hope, and earnestly pray, that these ends may be answered in the services of this day.

Having given this short account of the different views of Christian Churches, as professed by three denominations of Christians, we cheerfully submit the matter to impartial minds, which is the most simple, and the best suited to the sacred rule.—Christianity in the times of Christ and his Apostles, was never sufficiently strong to constitute an Established Church. Every attempt of that kind, had they desired it, would have been wholly impracticable. The controul of one society of christian professors over another, would have ill suited the humility, and self-denying spirit of those times.

That which is most simple is most perfect. The larger the body of men, who act in any business, and in general the more confusion. On the other hand, one man may be inadequate to matters of importance; but in the counsel of a few, who are immediately concerned, there is safety. Every individual congregation is certainly equal to the management of its own affairs; and to carry them farther, is not likely to promote the designs of true religion, in any particular place.

The Independents suppose they derive their principles of Church-government from the New Testament.

Testament. They are not afraid of investigation, because they think that existing circumstances, in the times of Christ and his Apostles, forbid any other. They are certain, indeed, that their system is unpopular. They know it gives no dominion, and but little emolument. It has never been much enlivened by the smiles of royal favour. But few of the dignitaries of clerical eminence have believed in it. The distance at which they stand from the poor despised followers of Jesus Christ, makes Independent Church government too insignificant for their approbation. To subject a minister to the controul of a private society, and put him on a level, in point of authority, with the rest of the people, is very degrading. But so it ought to be, for we are not to be lords over God's heritage. We have no dominion over your faith, your practice, or your Church decisions. We tender you our advice, and connect it with our prayers, and we pretend to no more.

Independency aims at no great things: It clips the wings of towering ambition, and lances the tumour of human pride. It does not place a man over parishes, nor confer on him the honours of this world; but it leaves him nearly in the same situation with its Founder, and bids him not to seek great things for himself: Encouraging his heart with the conviction that he copies the model exhibited in the Gospel, he is content, not to aim at the honour which is from men, but from God only. Do not wonder then, that it makes no conspicuous figure on the page of ecclesiastical history; and is so much despised in general, by men who connect in their ideas the mitre and the crown. Search for it not in the records of men, but in the revelation of God. Adhere to it in humble poverty: Honour your cause by steadiness, integrity, and obedience. Maintain your principles in the spirit of the Gospel.

Distinguish

Distinguish between the rights of God in matters of religion, and the rights of men in civil government; and render to Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and to God the things which are God's. Attend divine ordinances regularly; esteem your Minister, and encourage his heart; walk circumspectly towards those that are without, as ornaments of Christianity. In one word, love the Brotherhood, fear God, and honour the King. Thus your little interest will flourish, your numbers will increase, you will be edified, and made meet for Heaven, which is the great design of all religion.

After Mr. WYDOWN had answered the questions, usually proposed on these solemnities, he made the subsequent declaration of his religious sentiments.

On such occasions as these, I look upon it as peculiarly proper to assign a reason of the hope that is in us, and to make a public and solemn avowal of those important doctrines, which constitute the glorious Gospel of God our Saviour. I rejoice in that liberty which allows us to think and worship as conscience dictates; and, as I would judge of others, who differ from me by the rule of gospel charity, it will not be an unreasonable expectation, to hope for the same indulgence, wherein I may differ from them.

As the foundation of all religion, natural or revealed, I believe the existence of one God, the first cause of all things; who in his nature is purely spiritual; free from those gross properties and passions incident to, and inseparable from corporeal beings; possessed of all possible perfections, natural and moral; who created the universe by an act of his omnipotent will; who upholds, and whose providence constantly superintends and governs all things.

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The scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the word of God, given by the infallible inspiration of the Spirit of God.

The authenticity of this revelation stands supported by the best of evidence; viz. miracles wrought by the finger of God; prophecies given, and exactly accomplished hundreds of years afterwards; the majesty and beauty of the style; the sublime glory of the doctrines; the untainted purity of the precepts; and the pleasing effects produced by it on the consciences of men; being completely calculated "for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work."

I believe the scriptures reveal a trinity of persons in the Godhead: That Father, Son, and Spirit, import more than a difference of character,—even a real, though ineffable distinction in the manner of the divine existence: "That there are three which bear record in heaven,—the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and that these three are one."

The estate wherein God originally made man, was a state of purity, perfection, and happiness; but by transgression our first parents broke the law of their creation, forfeited all their happiness, lost the image of God, became subject to the awful penalty annexed to disobedience; and, as Adam was a covenant head, all his natural descendents fell in him, and are liable to the same misery.

That all mankind might not perish in the ruins of the fall, the sacred Trinity entered into a covenant of redemption, to raise sinners from their apostate and ruined condition; and to bring them, through grace, to spiritual life and endless glory. In consequence of this covenant, when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his

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Son, who assumed our nature, and in that nature, as a federal head, fulfilled all righteousness; and, by the sacrifice of himself upon the cross, made a full atonement for sin. After he had lain the appointed time in the grave, he burst the bars of death, and having shewn himself alive from the dead, at various times, to chosen witnesses, he ascended to his throne of glory, where he ever liveth to make intercession for all who come unto God by him.

No man can know, or believe in Christ for salvation, while in an unregenerate state: therefore, the special influence of the Eternal Spirit is absolutely necessary, to make the Gospel effectual, for enlightning our dark understandings to discern our misery, and the glory of Jesus, for subduing our stubborn wills to a cordial reception of his righteousness, for our conformity to his moral image, and the perfection of our happiness in his kingdom.

Justification I consider as a judicial act of God, wherein, as a righteous Law-giver, he acquits the believing sinner from every charge of guilt, on consideration of the full satisfaction made for sin, by the death of his Son; and pronounces him worthy of the life promised to the obedient on account of the consummate righteousness of the Redeemer, whose righteousness is graciously imputed to him, and received by "faith, which faith also is the gift of God."

Christ, as King in Zion, has appointed a standing ministry in the Church, which he attests by his Spirit, as his own institution, for the conversion of sinners, and the edification of his saints, in faith and holiness; by the same Spirit he disposes and prepares his Ministers, and by his Providence (expressed in the call of his Church) leads them out to the public exercise of their high and honourable vocation.

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This service consists in a diligent attention to the administration of divine ordinances, more especially public prayer, preaching the word, baptism, and the supper of the Lord. Baptism I esteem a sacred ordinance, whereby the subject is dedicated to Father, Son, and Spirit, and regularly set apart as a visible subject of Christ's kingdom. I believe there is a sense in which the infant seed of baptized Christians are holy to the Lord, and as such, are proper subjects of this ordinance, there being not a single instance, in the New Testament, wherein the baptism of such infants was deferred till riper years. The Lord's Supper I regard as an ordinance peculiar to those who profess faith in Christ, and who are able to discern the Lord's body, and to remember his death with repentance and love.

I believe there is a day fixed, in the eternal counsels of God, in which he will judge all the nations of mankind: When their bodies, which may have slumbered in the grave thousands of years, shall be raised from the dust, and be re-united to those souls from which they were separated by death: That then the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, and every individual receive a sentence according to the state in which he died: That the impenitent and unbelieving will be doomed to eternal despair and torment, under the wrath of God; and that the righteous shall enter into the celestial mansions with triumphant joy, and be for ever with the Lord.

Thus I have particularised those doctrines which I deem the most important in religion, and which I hope to inculcate and defend in my future ministrations. And I earnestly entreat an interest in the prayers of all present, that I may ever approve myself to God, as a faithful servant in his spiritual house.

THE C H A R G E.

MY RESPECTED FRIEND AND BROTHER,

AS we have no authority over your faith, we do not pretend to invest you with any new powers. Your right to preach the gospel yesterday, was as valid as it can be to day, or in any future period of your life. We come to you, not as lords in the assumption of superiority, but as brethren, invited by you, in conjunction with your people, to witness your engagements, to assist you with our advice, and to offer up our fervent prayers, to him who hath received gifts for men, that you may be enriched with all his fulness.

I assure myself, with regard to the duties I am called to discharge, in the solemnities of this day, that your confidence in the purity of my intentions, will supersede the necessity of any apology for the freedom with which I shall address you; and that your piety, with the blessing of our Lord Jesus, will secure and perpetuate the happiness I desire for you, while I remind you, in the words of the apostle Paul, recorded in the 1st epistle to the Corinthians, the 4th chapter, and second verse, **IT IS REQUIRED IN STEWARDS, THAT A MAN BE FOUND FAITHFUL.**

How various, and how striking are the applications of the sacred writings, to the character you sustain! And how calculated to inspire every sentiment and exertion, connected with your present usefulness,

usefulness, and your final exaltation before the Chief Shepherd and Bishop of souls!

From the dignity of your office, you are stiled an *Ambassador*,—an ambassador of the King of kings. As one of his representatives among the sons of men, as intrusted with the honours of his sovereignty; you must be ambitious to enlarge the bounds and increase the glory of his empire; you must try every art, and strive with all the energy of your soul, to persuade the enemies of his government to lay down their arms, submit to his sceptre, and cast themselves upon his clemency.

You are stiled a *Bishop*; observe then the leading traits of this character, as they are drawn by the masterly hand of an inspired apostle. A Bishop must be blameless, as the Steward of God, not soon angry, not self-willed, not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but a lover of good men, sober, vigilant, apt to teach; just, holy, temperate; that by sound doctrine, he may be able to exhort, and to convince the gain-sayers.

Son of man, God hath made you a *Watchman* in mount Zion. Here you are to watch for souls, as one that must give an account; therefore sleep not as do others, but put on the armour of light, and endure hardness, that you may save the city of God from the depredations of the strong man armed, and yourself from the degradation, shame, and misery of neglecting your duty at the post of danger.

In your ministry and general deportment, the people committed to your charge are authorized to expect the tenderness and care of a faithful *Shepherd*. If you feel that interest in them which is essential to this character, you will not flee when you see the wolf coming; but your sympathy and courage will equal every exigence, and like the Shepherd of Israel, you will gather, and feed, and defend them, that they may not perish, or wander from the fold.

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May it never be said of you, as of the Shepherds whom the Prophet Ezekiel so awfully reproves:— The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force, and with cruelty have ye ruled them.

The Ministers of Jesus are represented as skilful *Builders*, who, with becoming solicitude, collect, prepare, and arrange materials for the edifice, they are engaged to raise. You know the foundation which is laid in Zion; upon this foundation you are to build, with gold, silver, and precious stones; then all the building fitly framed together, shall become a perfect temple for the eternal residence of the divine nature.

The church is compared to a vineyard, a field, a garden, in which you are to *labour* early and late; in season and out of season. With indefatigable attention, study the nature of the soil; let each part receive its necessary culture; and, in the exercise of faith and prayer, wait for the fruitful showers. The Lord of the harvest has set you over this church, as he says of Jeremiah, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, to build, and to plant, and to water; and as he hath called you to so important a work, he will give you his blessing, which maketh rich; so, that although you now go forth weeping, you shall come again with rejoicing, bringing your sheaves with you.

As one of the *Angels* of the church, you must excel in wisdom, purity, zeal, humility, and intimacy with the Lord Jesus. Do the angels desire clearer discoveries of the mysterious dispensations of redeeming love? So must you. Do they, with ex-
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panded wings, stand before the throne of God, ready to execute his gracious commands? With such alacrity you should serve him, in all the paths of duty. Shall they descend with the trump of God and gather the elect from the four winds of heaven on the last day? So, you must go forth *now*, and with the silver trumpet of the gospel, summons the guilty and distressed, to the standard of the cross.—Is there joy among those blessed intelligences, when a sinner is converted from the error of his ways? Thus will you rejoice in the promulgation of evangelical knowledge and happiness, without respect to parties.

To the dignity of an Ambassador, the devotion of a Bishop, the care and activity of a watchman, the skill of an architect, the labour of the husbandman, and the wisdom, purity, zeal, humility, and spirituality of an angel;—to these must be united the FIDELITY of a STEWARD. The Lord has made you ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season; and blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing; for he shall give up his accounts with joy, and not with grief.

To your care, the King of Zion hath committed the oracles, the doctrines, the ordinances of his grace; the souls of his creatures; the peace and prosperity of his house; the honours of his character. These are your *charge*. A charge of infinite importance, both to yourself and others. You are set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel. Your preaching will prove, to some, a favour of death unto death; to others, we hope to many, the favour of life unto life. Various are the anxieties you will experience in relation to the issue of your engagements. What, thus you will often reflect, What, if any of these people should be lost? be lost through my neglect! What, if after preaching
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to others, I myself should be a cast away? Who is sufficient for these things? Your work is indeed arduous, and innumerable obstacles will oppose themselves to your success; but your sufficiency is of God; and, while you confide in his promise, and sincerely aim to promote his designs, you will be invested with higher prerogatives than men of any other profession; you are made capable of sublimer pleasures; and having kept the trust deposited with you, and finished your appointed labours, you will be exalted to greater glory. He who wins souls, is the best orator. He is the greatest hero, who counts not his life dear in the cause of Christ; and he who is most useful in disseminating the principles of essential truth, shall fill the highest throne, and wear the brightest crown, in the kingdom of heaven.

But to animate you in the pursuit of your important and honourable vocation, it is necessary I should particularise your *obligations*; not as your teacher, but merely to put you in remembrance. Preach the whole counsel of God in application to the moral circumstances of your hearers. Descend to the lowest capacity; bring the truth home to every bosom; and be ambitious of excelling in plain experimental, practical preaching. By a general abstract mode of investigating doctrines, you may, like the moon, give light; but when with generous fervour you urge them upon the heart you will in resemblance of the sun communicate both light and heat. Impenitent consciences are to be alarmed. You must warn every man, and teach every man in all wisdom. Reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all long suffering. Know the people of your immediate charge individually; watch over them with paternal attention and tenderness; and often visit them with a view to make inquiries relating to the state of religion in their minds and families.

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Take pleasure in hearing them and asking them questions. In this way you may often collect valuable materials for the exercises of the pulpit, and be better qualified to speak a word in season to them that are weary. Hold the reins of discipline in your little society with a steady hand; see that every member regularly fills up his place, and that he uniformly adorns his profession; and be very particular in your pastoral concern for the younger members of your congregation. Instruct them in the doctrines you have received from God, and in the principles of your dissent from the established Church, that with wisdom and meekness they may give a reason of their hope, and maintain the honour of their connexions against all the opposition of bigotry.

Although your attention should be particularly engaged in this congregation, you are not to suppose that your obligations extend no further. Our Lord Jesus furnishes a bright example of duty in *going about* to do good.—Imbibe and cultivate a missionary spirit. Go and visit the benighted villages round your station. Wait not for invitations but seek the lost sheep; and should no friendly door be opened to receive you, go into the highways, and lanes, and streets; for while some ridicule you as an enthusiast, and while others persecute you as an impostor, he whose steps you follow, and of whose sufferings you partake, will, at the last day, pronounce you a good and faithful servant, before an assembled world. Some of your brethren, by means of itinerant preaching in their neighbourhoods, have considerably increased the number of their hearers, and to such exertions many have ascribed their first dawn of spiritual light. Others, either from indolence, or covetousness, or tenaciousness of what they quaintly call their *regularity*, or from the dread of being zealous *overmuch*, leave

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towns and villages to perish for lack of knowledge, and never appear so animated as in their declamations against those who are desirous of making known the savour of their Redeemer's name in every place. You cannot hesitate with which of these classes you shall cast in your lot.

Faithfully to discharge the obligations thus particularized, the Stewards of God must be *renewed in the spirit of their minds*, and *actuated by pure principles*. Some are moved to take upon them the office of Priest by the desire of emolument, and an easy genteel life: Others may probably engage in the work uninfluenced by any of those bad motives which degrade their characters, or by those divine principles which exalt them. But I persuade myself, that in you the desire of glorifying the Lord Jesus, will triumph over all others. If the love of Jesus, and of souls constrain you, your study will prove a Bethel, and your pulpit will be encircled with more glory than any throne of state. With purity of principle, you must combine clear views of the truths which are to be the subjects of your ministry. As an honest man, you cannot preach what you do not believe, nor will you ever preach with pleasure to yourself, or with any fair prospect of advantage to others, what you doubt. When you comprehend the design of the Spirit of God in the doctrines you discuss, your tongue will be as the pen of a ready writer, and your words will distil as the dew. Whatever advantages you may derive from commentators, you cannot, in the full sense of the apostle, rightly divide the word of truth, unless you look up to him whose prerogative it is to reveal and apply the truth to your mind. Preachers, without spiritual illumination, are like sun-dials in a cloudy day; they exhibit, by certain external marks the design for which they are formed; but are

are of no use till the sun of righteousness arise and shine upon them.

Impressed with the divinity of these sentiments, you will accompany all your private and public exhortations, with frequent and earnest prayer; for thus every good and every perfect gift cometh down from the Father of lights. Ask, and you shall receive. Cultivate a *devotional spirit*. Be cheerful without levity; and serious, without gloom. As you value life and peace, be spiritually minded. To be habitually affected with the majesty and love of God, to engage all your powers in the contemplation of the Saviour's glory, and in the promotion of his purposes; to be ready on all occasions to speak of him among his friends, and for him before his enemies, as the supreme object of your delight; to count the souls you win, the only gain worthy of your ambition; to enjoy divine fellowship with your people, in occasional interviews, and stated seasons of worship; to live in the humble assurance of your Master's present approbation, and the everlasting fruition of his smiles:—These things will make you, like the harbinger of Jesus, a burning and a shining light; they will prove the brightest ornaments of your character; they will secure the great objects of your mission, and perpetuate your remembrance beyond the grave.

As a faithful steward, you will endeavour to be holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. I cannot be supposed to make this remark with the design of conveying any reflection, or to hint the least suspicion. May no stain ever rest upon the purity of your moral reputation. But as a man beset with snares, and subject to infirmities, you know in what need you stand of caution from your brethren, and of grace from God. You know how you ought to watch and pray against the delusions of the world, and the subtle malice of your

grand adversary. Under the Mosaic economy, none were admitted to the priesthood, but such as were in a state of eminent conformity to the divine nature; and, under the dispensation of the gospel, the irreligion, and profane lives of preachers have produced the greatest mischief to the cause of truth. An immoral clergy have long been the bane of the established hierarchy. To say nothing of their general attachment to the gaieties and pleasures of the world, many of them are degraded by subjection to the basest vices, and but few are distinguished by that heavenly mindedness, and zeal, in seeking the lost sheep of the house of Israel, which are required by the Bishop of souls. Concern for the honour of religion, and compassion for souls, must constrain you to deplore the existence of these awful facts, and inspire you with a full determination to reverse them in your own deportment. Were you as orthodox as an angel, without a corresponding proportion of holiness in heart and life you would be as the sounding brass or the tinkling cymbal. You would depress the hopes of Zion's friends, you would form the sneers, and constitute the triumphs of infidels.

With unremitting diligence apply yourself to the improvement of your mental and acquired abilities. Love retirement; rise early; set your work in order, and pursue it with the ardour and solicitude which characterize the men of the world in their concerns. It is your duty to visit, and to take care of your domestic concerns; but the best, and greatest portion of your time, must be devoted to God in private. A famous actress, receiving many invitations to the houses of the great and opulent, excused herself from accepting any of them, because her time was due to the public; that she might prepare herself in the most perfect manner to appear before them for their entertainment. When a clergyman, says
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a late excellent writer, is invited to spend his hours at card-playing, or chit-chat meetings, has he not an apology to make of the same kind, but of a more important and interesting nature? And, if he be deficient in the duties of *his* profession, for want of so excusing himself, will not this actress rise up in judgment against him, and condemn him?

Redeem the season of youth; and every day lay up in store something valuable for the time to come. With these views give attendance to reading. In almost every book, deserving the attention of a sensible man, you will meet with something to assist you in the composition of your sermons: But let the sacred writings occupy the chief place in your affections. Study them with intense application; that you may bring out of their inexhaustible treasures things new and old. You are called an extemporary preacher; but God forbid you should ever be such in the literal import of the term, at least when under no providential disability for study. Labour in your closet, as if you had no expectations of spiritual assistance in the pulpit; and, preach with such unreserved dependance upon the Holy Spirit, as you would profess to do, if you had not previously studied. Dr. Hammond always had a subject under consideration, that whatever course of reading he pursued, he never failed to meet with something to his purpose. For this reason, he no sooner had finished one sermon, but he immediately had another in hand: Thus, he was never idle, and all his studies turned to present account. He never walked out without a book, and had always one laying open in his chamber. Some preachers seldom think of preparing for the solemnities of the Sabbath, till the close of the week; and some *never* prepare; good men, they will preach by the spirit; and so they do. But by what spirit? The spirit of indolence, infatuation, and presumption.

presumption. In vain did the man in the fable pray for help, while he did not set his shoulders to the wheel.

And, remember, that to render your studies pleasant to yourself, and your attainments profitable to others, you must imbibe a *meek* and *affectionate* temper. Speak the truth in love. Do not preach the doctrines of the cross as the mere creed of a party; nor ever introduce names of distinction in a spirit of angry invective. This, so far from convincing and winning the advocates of error, will increase their disgust with the truths which you have declared to be the objects of your faith; and will invigorate their enmity against them. Some men, disciples of Jesus I dare not call them, seem to have no idea of evidencing their attachment to truth, but by hard speeches, and persecuting conduct.— These are they, who involve the character of infinite goodness, in the horrors of tyranny; they convert religion into a system of barbarous arrogance; and render themselves incapable of all that is respectable in devotion, or that is animating in the testimony of an approving conscience.

Would you confute erroneous opinions? Preach the gospel in language corresponding with its native genius. “O how careful, says the pious author of the Christian Armour, is God, that nothing should be in the preacher to prejudice the sinners judgment, or harden his heart against the offer of his grace! If the servant be proud and hasty, how shall they know the master is meek and patient? God would have them do nothing to make the breach wider, or to hinder a happy close betwixt him and them. He that will take the bird, must not scare it. A froward, peevish messenger is no friend to him that sends him. Sinners are not to be pelted with stones of hard provoking language, but wooed by heart-melting

melting exhortations." O! then have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way.

I would respectfully advise you not to interfere with political discussions in the pulpit. Many of our brethren in the national church have strikingly exemplified the inutility and folly of such preaching. They have joined the potsherd of the earth in the strife of the times; and with a degree of asperity not to be justified, in reference to the most guilty of men, they have ascribed sentiments to us, as Dissenters, which they themselves cannot more abhor than we do; and as if they were combined to revive the reign of persecution, with a degree of unanimity to which they are strangers on almost every other occasion, they have pronounced us unworthy of our partial immunities, and all the rights of civil society. The old cry of Disaffection to the state, has wonderfully assisted the charitable designs of the Church. In vain, have we asserted our affection for the land of our nativity; in vain, have we appealed to the strongest evidence, that such assertions are sincere. Our submission is still imputed to necessity, and our professions are treated as the ebullitions of hypocrisy and fear.

Beware of such apostacy from the temper and example of Jesus Christ. A Clergyman, whether of the Established Church, or a Dissenter, who devotes his time in public, or his zeal in private, to irritate the passions, and depreciate the religious reputation of his neighbours, grossly libels the character he bears, and does unspeakable injury to the cause he is bound to promote. Amidst the fire-brands of misrepresentation, and the arrows of invective, possess your soul in patience. Betray no disposition to retaliate. To every temptation of party violence, let the answer of Nehemiah to Sanballat and his associates, be your's:—"I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down:
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Why should the work cease, while I leave it, and come down to you?"

Various circumstances may occur to try your temper, within the bounds of your own connexions. Yet, under all you must *be gentle, even as a nurse cherisheth her children.*——No affairs of private pique should ever be mentioned, or even hinted at in this place; nor should you here sacrifice a moment in replying to the attacks of malevolence. Be like that philosopher, who when told he had been defamed by some of his enemies, meekly answered, Never mind; I will so live that nobody shall believe them. A minister of religion without meekness, is like a ship on a boisterous sea without ballast. How many young men of promising abilities have I seen lost to the Church of Christ by a peevish, irritable, haughty temper? O, save yourself from this untoward generation, considering him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself!

With affection, you must associate *prudence.*——Your situation particularly requires the exercise of this virtue. What are ministerial abilities without affection? And what is affection without prudence? Your lot is cast where the principles of bigotry are lively and active; where the grounds of non-conformity are very partially understood; and, where, in all probability, they will be much opposed: therefore, you should be studious to maintain in your deportment, the wisdom of the serpent, and the innocence of the dove. Often review your situation. Familiarize the leading features of the society over which you preside. Walk in wisdom towards them that are without. Become all things to all men, that you may gain some. Your prospect of usefulness in this barren part of the vineyard, is *now* calculated to animate your hopes; and although you can do nothing without the blessing of God,
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that blessing is so sure, if you act with propriety, that your brethren, and friends will, in some measure, ascribe to you, the disappointment of their desires, and expectations. But, while I thus speak, I indulge the pleasing confidence, that your sense as a man, your piety as a christian, and your concern for the honour of Christ as a minister, will effectually avert the evils we deprecate, and secure the blessings we affectionately desire for you.

As a faithful steward in the house of God, you will receive a great, an infinite reward. While you do not shun to declare the whole counsel of God, with fidelity and zeal; while your spirit and conduct imitate the illustrious example of Jesus; you will enjoy the testimony of Enoch, that you please God; and your ministry, like the gentle rain succeeded by the benign influences of the sun, will make the desert barren soul blossom as the rose, and revive as the corn. At the same time your own mind will be as a field which the Lord hath blessed. Although the archers may sorely grieve you, and shoot at you, and hate you, your bow will abide in strength, and the arms of your hands be made strong, by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob. You will have meat to eat that others know not of, and joys which the stranger intermeddleth not with. Whatever you may suffer from the enmity of man, be still and know that in the friendship of God, your consolations will abound. Behold he hath made you this day, as a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls. Lo! he is with you, and he will never leave you nor forsake you.

When you are tempted to conclude, as may often be the case, that you labour in vain, recollect who hath said,—As the rain cometh down, and the

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snow from heaven, and returneth not thither; but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. Your usefulness may be concealed from your knowledge; but what you know not now, you shall know hereafter. Hundreds with whom you have had no acquaintance in this life, may, in the world to come, acknowledge themselves indebted to your instrumentality for their salvation. When your sky is cloudy and dark; your way rough and thorny; when your soul is cast down, and your harp hung upon the willows, reflect on the various sources of consolation, opened for your relief, in the sacred writings. Under all your afflictions, assure yourself of being comforted with those consolations, by which you have comforted others, when the candle of the Lord shone round about you. Your own fleece shall not remain long dry, while the dew of covenant love rests upon your flock.

As a minister, living in the spirit of Christ, and with unreserved devotion, to his praise, men once ready to perish will rise up and call you blessed; in life you will secure the affection and prayers of your people, and, in some instances at least, *the respect of the world*; and rejoicing in the testimony of an approving conscience, you will come down to your grave like as a shock of corn cometh in, in his season. Lift up your head; rejoice and be exceeding glad, for as his sufferings abound in you, so your comforts will also abound by him. You are more *capable* of happiness than any other character in the world, for your sole business is to converse with God in his truth and ordinances; and thus
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you will find an inestimable reward in your work, and on the accomplishment of it the angel of the Lord shall descend and wave the olive branch of peace over your dying bed, and conduct you, crowned with laurels, to the right hand of the Majesty on high; where you will shine as the brightness of the firmament for ever and ever.



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S E R M O N.

TRULY important, is the business which brought us together this day ; and which hath so far engaged our attention. I trust, my dear brethren and friends, the solemnities of our present meeting, afford joy in heaven among the angels of God. I flatter myself, they will be attended with suitable effects on our hearts. Our present employment is intimately connected with the glory of God ; and I hope, our ultimate aim is nothing less. It is not possible it should be any thing higher. God himself, in all his works, never loses sight of his own glory, neither should we. Our chief end is to glorify, and enjoy him for ever. While our present work aims at the glory of God as its ultimate end, it has further for its object, as subservient to that end, nothing less than the eternal salvation of immortal souls. Where a gospel ministry is established, the end designed, is not only the Minister's own salvation, but likewise the salvation of them that hear him. These sublime objects include others of great magnitude, to which also our present exercises are directed : They are the overthrow of Antichrist's kingdom ; the destruction of spiritual Babylon and Sodom ; the demolishing of Satan's strong-holds, and the complete emancipation of his poor deluded slaves. To be a party concerned,

concerned, in transactions so solemn, and of such importance, affords a pleasing satisfaction, which neither the wealth of all the nations in the world can purchase, nor all the trophies which swell the triumphs of conquering hero's, can ever produce. The part which devolves upon me, is to address a few words to you who have called our brother to take upon him that weighty charge, which he hath this day publicly and solemnly accepted.

My Christian-friends, I would say unto you in the words of the Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, chap. xiii. v. 21. I BESEECH YOU, BRETHREN, SUFFER THE WORD OF EXHORTATION. I have a word to speak unto you, *1st*, On the duties you owe to your Pastor, *2^{dly}*, On the duties you owe to one-another, and *3^{dly}*, On those which, as professing Christians, you owe to men in general.

I. As to your Pastor. Let me exhort you to esteem him highly. This is a duty altogether reasonable, and plainly included, in many other duties, which, as Christians, you are bound to perform. Is it a Christian's duty to love his enemy? how much more to love his Pastor! All will agree that children should love their parents; surely then, none will deny but that Christians should love their fathers and feeders in Christ! The divine precept, on this subject, is quite explicit. It runs thus, "Know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake." If the nature and end of their office be considered, together with the greatness, the glory, and authority of him who hath qualified them for it, and called them to it, with their own zeal and fidelity in the discharge thereof, they will be found entitled to the highest regard. If a master regard his faithful servant, surely a people should regard their faithful Minister! He is a Steward of the mysteries

teries of God. He is over them in the Lord. He rules well, and labours in the word and doctrine. He is an Ambassador for Christ. He is an Angel sent with glad tidings of great joy. He loves the people. He travels in birth till Christ be formed in them. He watches for their souls, as one that must give an account. He wants not to fleece, but to feed his flock. For them he studies, and for their salvation he ardently longs. For this he is willing to spend, and be spent. In this the happiness of his life, is in a measure wrapped up. He looks forward to the salvation of his people, as the crown of his rejoicing for ever. Surely such a man is entitled to esteem! He is a blessing to the place where he resides, and an honour to the country to which he belongs. Such men are the lights of the world, and the salt of the earth. They who are haters and despisers of them, have no genuine love, either for their God, their king, their country, or themselves.

2dly, Let me exhort you, not only to esteem your Pastor highly, but also to pray for him fervently. I am presuming that you are a praying people; for he that lives without prayer, lives without God in the world. When a sinner is once converted, behold, he prayeth! In this exercise he must persevere, till the Lord Jesus shall receive his departing spirit. Now, he that prays for himself, must, and will, pray for his Minister. But many times there is a shameful backwardness in the best, to this necessary and profitable employment. The many calls and exhortations thereto in the sacred scriptures, together with the melancholy experience of all the saints of God, make it evident to a demonstration. This hateful backwardness must not be indulged, but opposed. Jesus spake a parable, to this end, that men ought always to pray. The apostolic injunctions, on this subject, are such as these, "Pray without ceasing." "Pray
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“always with all prayer,” &c. But my present object is to excite your prayers, not only for yourselves, but for your Minister. He needs your petitions, and he is not too proud to beg them of you. Do not deny him this reasonable request. Paul desired the Ephesians to pray for him, that utterance might be given him, and that he might open his mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel. He said to the Thessalonians, Brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified. If the apostles stood in need of the prayers of the Churches, surely we may be supposed to stand in greater need thereof. Our work is of a similar kind, our opposition in it is so too, and we are not so vain and foolish as to think ourselves stronger and better qualified for it than they were, for we know the contrary. Pray then, for us, for our assistance, our ability, our encouragement and success in the work of our God. While your Pastor is faithful to his God, and diligent in his work, he, like his great Master, will have to bear his testimony against the world, that the deeds thereof are evil; and, when such is the case, he need not be surprised, to receive in return, as his Lord before him did, the hatred of the world. Ungodly men may deride, despise, and even curse him, as they did the prophet Jeremiah; but if he have the curses of the wicked, I hope he will have the prayers of his Flock, and the blessing of his God. These will comfort him in private, when the wicked revile him in public. The benefit to be expected by your prayers for him, is more than I can describe. Cornelius did not pray in vain, neither shall you. The prayers of the Church were heard for Peter, and so shall yours be heard for your Pastor now. O, then, forget not to pray, and in your prayers forget not your Minister. Be assured, in his prayers, he will be mindful of you, and make mention of you; so in yours,

yours, be mindful, and make mention of him. What a comfort is it, when Pastors and Churches receive mutual blessings, in answer to their mutual supplications!

3dly, In connexion with your affections and petitions for your Pastor, let me exhort you to be diligent in your attendance on his private and public ministrations. The precept which binds him to preach the word, is binding on you to hear the word preached. If the word do not profit those who mix not faith with hearing, how can it profit those who do not hear it at all? When our Saviour says, "Take heed what you hear, and how you hear," it must imply a taking heed *that we hear*. It may be expected, that when Ministers give an account of their preaching, people must give an account of their hearing; and, at the same time, why they have omitted to hear. Many profess to love the ministry of the gospel, who, for trifling reasons, neglect the ordinances thereof. This distresses the heart of their Minister, encourages others in carelessness, and weakens the evidences of their own sincerity. The busy enemy of our salvation, the insidious world through which we pass, and our own treacherous hearts, are all confederate to prevent our spiritual improvement. They combine their destructive cunning and artifice, to excuse our absence from those places where it is our best interest to go. My friends, let nothing keep you from divine ordinances, which would not detain you from fairs and markets. Consider the importance of your business in the house of God; you have to hear his most holy word, to sing his most worthy praise, and to ask of him, who has every thing to give, those things which are necessary both for your bodies and your souls. Consider what precious seasons have been enjoyed under the sound of the gospel! How calculated the word is for your comfort and edification in righteousness! Consider what

what unbelieving Thomas lost, and what many have lost, by being absent where the Lord is more immediately present. Know, that when your Minister stands here, he desires to be your mouth to God, and his mouth to you. He will wish to speak a word in season, both to you, and for you; and would you then willingly be absent? Let me hope better things. Come regularly, come constantly, come in time, and bring your hearts with you; or, rather let them be before you. As new born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby. When your Pastor has laboured to provide your spiritual food, in proportion to the greatness of his love for your souls, his sorrow will be great, that you have not come to partake. He loves you, and as such, desires not to see your pews empty, but your bodies present, and some tokens that your ears and hearts are open to receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. Come then, let me entreat you, come to the house of God; but not to trifle, not to sleep, not to criticise, but to sing and pray with the spirit, and to hear as for eternity.

4thly, I would exhort you to imitate your Minister's example, so far as he copies after Christ. I flatter myself he will not be one of those preachers, that have to request their people to do as they say, but not as they do. I trust, he will be an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in faith, in purity. It was the apostle's ambition, and I hope is ours, not to be Lords over God's heritage, but ensamples to the flock. Luke writes an account of all that Jesus began both to *do* and to teach. Paul could say, Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ. Your Minister will mind that his life be a living sermon; and, that by his living, as well as by his preaching, he may commend the truth to every man's conscience. Go ye
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and do likewise. Remember them, says an apostle, who have spoken unto you the word of God, considering the end of their conversation. Happy, happy people, who imitate those Ministers that are blameless, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, but not to covetousness and wine; who are no brawlers, nor strikers, nor proud; but who are grave, and patient, and blessed with a good report of them who are without.

5thly, and lastly, Let me exhort you to sympathize with him, and not forsake him in his afflictions. You will not need many arguments to convince you, that your Minister, from the nature of his employment, and the anxiety often attending the same, may be frequently subject to bodily indispositions. He is equally liable to crosses in his family, and adversity in the world, with yourselves. The devil is as much an adversary to him, as he is to any of you. His office to point out Satan's devices, and to testify against the world's wickedness, will not fail to procure him enemies from those quarters; so he may be reasonably expected to have many temptations, trials, and persecutions, peculiar to those who faithfully discharge the office which he has undertaken. When persecution, for the word's sake is permitted to arise, the persecutors generally begin first with the preachers. They smite the Shepherds that the sheep may be scattered. When the Great Shepherd was smitten, his friends forsook him and fled. In times of trial, many have proved that the flesh is weak. When Paul was arraigned for the cause of his Lord, no man had courage to appear on his behalf. At my first answer, says he, no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. My friends, take heed, that your Minister may never have to say of you, as Paul had of Demas, "They have forsaken me." If his love
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for the truth constrain him to defend it against all opposition and in the midst of persecution ; it would be base ingratitude in you to forsake him ; but I hope better things of you, and that you will not forsake him should he be brought into distress, especially by means of his zeal, in promoting your salvation. In such a case, I trust you will be like Onesiphorus to Paul, who oft refreshed him, and was not ashamed of his chains, but when Paul was a sufferer at Rome, sought him out very diligently, and found him. The present times are somewhat alarming, and those who have courage to protest against establishments which they do not believe Christ hath established, are often branded, as persons disaffected to the civil constitution of their country : As if a person, must necessarily deprive Cæsar of the things which are his, merely because he withholds from him, the things which, in his conscience, he believes to be God's. As men in power become destitute of candour ; and give themselves licence to censure, without evidence of guilt ; the objects of their dislike, have ground for alarm. It will not hurt either minister or people to prepare for the worst. Our Lord apprized his followers of heavy sufferings, and his Apostles forewarned the churches of fiery trials ; but this they did, not to damp their zeal by intimidating their spirits ; but to prevent their surprise, and rouse their ardour, in proportion, as trials and opposition should render the exertions of it necessary. I hope you will never behold your Minister in bonds, but if you should, I trust it will be for nothing worse than bearing his testimony for Christ ; and then you will have no need to be ashamed of his chains.

In the mean time withhold not from him, as his need may require, and your ability will admit, for his temporal support. I hope he is like minded

with the Apostle, who would work with his hands, rather than be burdensome to the churches. But let me intreat you to consider, that the ordinance of God is, "That he who is taught in the word, must communicate to him that teacheth in all good things." The Lord hath ordained, that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel. There is nothing unreasonable in this institution. God would not be its author, if such were the case.—Accordingly, obedience to it, is enforced by the general reason of things, Who goeth a warfare at his own charges? Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit? Who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? The laborious ox must have his food. Surely the workman is worthy of his meat! If your minister then sow unto you spiritual things, you will not think it much to let him reap a little of your carnal things. If he must be given to hospitality, and give himself wholly to the work of the ministry, not entangling himself with the affairs of this life, then he must have the means of subsistence and hospitality provided for him. I would not be considered in this part of my exercise, as a begging friar. I am neither begging for myself, nor for your pastor; but merely pointing out the Christian's duty, and the reasonableness of it, according to the ordinance of Christ. Some may think we cannot be faithful because we cannot compel our salaries; or sue for tithes; but this, to say the least of it, is little less than a libel on the institutions of Christ, and the character of Christians. It may imply that they who think such things of us, suspect what they themselves would be, were they circumstanced in that respect as we are; but if ever they come to act as we do, and that with sincerity upon the principles which we profess, all such thoughts will be dispelled from their hearts. They will find that

that a fear to offend our contributors, is not more powerful to deter us from speaking the truths of God, than may have been, their former desires to please their patrons and squires, from whom they expected promotions, perhaps to a plurality of livings.

But it is time for me now, as I proposed, in the 11d. place to speak on the duties you owe one to another. And,

1st, Let me exhort you to love one another. This is your loving Redeemer's reiterated command; and by your obedience thereto, shall all men know that you are his disciples. They who are taught of God, are taught to love one another. "Be kindly affectioned one to another in brotherly love," was the exhortation of Paul to the Christians of former times; it is mine to you this day. See that ye love one another, with a pure heart, fervently. Love is the pure fountain of all our duties both to God and man. The Apostle says, "It is the fulfilling of the law." Surely it is a sweet bond of Christian communion! If you love the brethren, and love as brethren, it will be a good evidence that you love God, and are passed from death unto life: But if a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? O! brethren, let your love not be in word only, but in deed and in truth. Live in love, and the God of peace and love will be with you.

2^{dly}, I would exhort you to live in peace and unity one with another. When the Apostle tells the Thessalonians to esteem their Ministers very highly in love for their work's sake, he adds those solemn words, "*And be at peace among yourselves.*" Brethren, follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

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Be of one mind, live in peace. Endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Be joined together in the same mind. Be of one accord, and let nothing be done through strife, or vain glory. Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. It is like the precious ointment upon the head of Aaron, that went down to the skirts of his garments. Never forget that your God is the God of peace, and lover of concord. Your Jesus is the Prince of Peace, and has pronounced the peace-makers blessed; and said, that they shall be called the children of God. His gospel, is the gospel of peace. Then, brethren, I beseech you, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that there be no divisions among you. The contentions and strife among professing Christians, are the joy of devils and the triumph of infidels. Do not make them sport, by biting and devouring one another, but rather constrain them to say, "See how these Christians love."

3dly, Sympathize with, pray for, and affectionately admonish one another. Weep with them that weep. Bear ye one another's burthens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. Remember them that are in bonds as bound with them, and them that are in adversity as, being yourselves also in the body. If one of the members suffer, all the members suffer with it. May every one of you be able to say with Paul, "Who is weak, and I am not weak?" Jesus is a sympathizing Saviour, and they who are at all conformed to his image, will sympathize one with another. When Saul persecuted the Church, Jesus said unto him, "Why persecutest thou me?" Hereby shewing, that in all her afflictions, he was afflicted. When Nehemiah heard of the afflictions of his brethren, though himself in a court, his heart was so affected, that he wept, he mourned, he fasted and prayed earnestly for them. They were all members of one body; and,

as no man ever yet hated his own flesh, they felt one for another. "If one member be in pain, says Dr. Owen, the rest have little ease; it is a rotten member, which is not affected with the anguish of its companions." Let me remind you, my brethren, that you are fellow-men; you have been fellow-sinners, and are now fellow-saints; fellow-citizens; fellow-soldiers; fellow-servants, and fellow-sufferers; you must then be fellow-helpers, and comforters one of another; and, by and by, you will be fellow-heirs of everlasting glory.

Pray, one for another. If you must do so for all men, even for those who despitefully use you and persecute you, surely you must do it for the saints, and especially for those with whom you are in church-fellowship. If it be not in your power to help one another in any other way, it is in this; and the service you may render, by so doing, is more than many imagine. Hereby you will prevail with God, who, is able to do exceedingly, abundantly, above all that you can either ask or think. And, my friends, forget not to admonish, and reprove one another, as occasion may require. Thou shalt in any-wise rebuke thy brother, and not suffer sin upon him. Yet account him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother. Go, and tell him his fault, according to our Saviour's rule, *Matt. xviii. 15, 16, 17.* If any of you do err from the faith, and one convert him, let him know, that he saves a soul from death, and hides a multitude of sins. The performance of this duty, however, requires the greatest care and attention, that it be done in pity, and not in malice and envy; in patience, and not in spite and passionate revenge; it must be done with a feeling and humbling sense, that in many things we all offend. It sometimes happens, that the most faulty are the most forward to throw stones at others. They have more sin,
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in their proud conceited anger, against the weaknesses of others, than is to be found in the weaknesses against which they are enraged. Cast the beam out of thine own eye; then shalt thou see clearly to cast the mote out of thy brother's eye; and, let it appear, that the glory of God, the honor of religion, and the benefit of the persons admonished and reprov'd, are the great objects you have in view. Now, my brethren, if you thus live in love, in peace, and in the exercise of prayer from a sympathizing heart; you will not speak evil one of another, but you will speak often one to another; not to provoke to wrath, but unto love and good works. Corrupt communications will not proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying. By this means you will know one another's case, and so, speak a word to one another's comfort. You will be kind, tender-hearted, and forgive, as you have been forgiven. Ye who are strong, will bear the infirmities of the weak; and, as the elect of God, will put on bowels of mercy and kindness. When you have this world's good, and see a brother or sister in need, you will not shut up your bowels of compassion from them; no, you will be ready to distribute, and willing to communicate. If they be hungry, you will give them meat; if thirsty, you will give them drink; if they be naked, you will clothe them; if they be sick, and in prison, you will go unto them. The good Lord enable you to abound in the due discharge of all these duties! I now come,

3dly, and lastly, To speak on the duties you owe to men in general. Judge not other professing Christians, but leave them to their own Master. At the same time, be ready to give a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear. As to the world, come out from among them, and be separate;

separate ; do not lay stumbling-blocks in their way ; but shine as lights ; so shine, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Heavenly Father. When they falsely accuse you ; put them to silence by your good conversation. While they watch for your halting and falling ; let them see that you run well, and hold on, and hold out unto the end. Fail not to use every mean in your power to bring them to the knowledge and love of the truth, even as it is in Jesus. Invite them to go with you to the house of God. Tell them what good you have found in his ways. But it may be, you have not access to their ears ; they will not suffer you to speak to them on any such subjects ; then speak to God for them. Pray him to renew and change their hearts. By the power that raised Jesus from the dead, he raised you to newness of life, and, by the same power he can raise them in like manner. My friends, what motives have you, to animate your zeal in the constant discharge of such duties as I have laid before you ! You never can hear of matters of greater moment, or in which you have a greater concern. Your present, your future, your everlasting happiness, is inseparably connected therewith. To encourage your steadfastness and diligence therein, you have all the saints upon earth, all the angels in heaven, all the promises in the Bible, and all the perfections of the Great Jehovah. Be not then discouraged, either by men or devils. Cleave to God, to your Minister, and to one another ; then, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners ; you shall put to flight all your enemies, and prove more than conquerors through him that loved you.

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